

GET READY!

Watch [the official movie trailer of Black Widow](#). What do you know about this character? About her universe?

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READING COMPREHENSION

Simply putting women on screen won't be enough to sustain Marvel post-Avengers

By Rebecca Wright - May 23, 2018

- 1 From the New Woman of the silent movie era – an archetype of bravery and beauty in the very first action and adventure films – to the more recent summer of the “Alpha Female” in 2015 (think Charlize Theron in *Mad Max: Fury Road*) the female action hero has never failed to excite and challenge. Proving to be a commercially lucrative success in her own right, she has broken social convention and been dynamic and powerful for more than 100 years.
- 5 For today's action fan, few other film series have held as much potential as the movies of the Marvel cinematic universe (MCU). But with great power comes great responsibility, especially when it comes to diversity. This year, *Black Panther* offered groundbreaking¹ race representations and did not disappoint when it came to its portrayal of women either. Now, as the initial Avengers-led saga starts to wind down, and with the anticipated release of both *Black Widow* and *Captain Marvel* solo films, it seems only right to ask, what can the future hold for the
- 10 women of Marvel?

The first 10 years

Over the last decade, the films which brought Marvel comic books to life have been applauded for making a difference in true representations of diversity. [...]

- 15 However, looking to the female characters, any future opportunities will depend on Marvel's willingness to acknowledge and not be limited by their own history. From the first MCU films, examples of pervasive², everyday sexism have been overlooked or dismissed in the name of history. [...]
- Even more recent films are occasionally marred with a sense of humour that tends toward displays of toxic masculinity and casual misogyny, denoting an air of sexism the films can no longer afford. From the way the women are spoken to, to the way they are spoken of, the men of the cohort consistently undermine³ the female action heroes. [...]

20 Unnecessary romance

Female Avengers are still constrained⁴ by emotional or romantic responsibility to their colleagues, too. Why is it Black Widow's responsibility to sooth the savage Hulk when it's time for him to return to the form of Bruce Banner? How convenient the two characters are also possible love interests, a role Black Widow has been written to play in a number of Marvel films. [...]

- 25 Yet there is hope on the horizon for the MCU. Female action heroes have already successfully led other superhero films (DC Comic's *Wonder Woman* was a smash hit in 2017) so it won't be hard for Marvel to replicate this success – but they can't rely on tired old formulas.
- Hollywood is changing – just look at recent calls for celebrity power to push for equal pay for colleagues, or contractual inclusion riders for greater equality and diversity. One hopes that the MCU does not miss the mark in recognising the power in these possibilities. Representations of female action heroes can be more than a reflection of our culture, they must be a vision of how we view each other and our place in the universe, cinematic or otherwise.
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1. groundbreaking: *révolutionnaire, novateur, avant-gardiste* 2. pervasive: *omniprésent* 3. to undermine: *discréditer*
4. constrained by: *contraint/limité par*

Axe : Art et pouvoir/Diversité et inclusion **Niveau :** B2
Problématique : What vision of feminism do Marvel movies give?

A. What is the main topic of this document? Use your own words.

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B. Paragraph 1 (l. 1-10) - Pick up all the movies featuring female heroines (other than Black Widow) listed in this paragraph. What are the characteristics of these movies?

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C. Paragraph 2 (l. 11-19) – Answer the following question and justify with a quote: according to the journalist, the main issue with the way women were represented in Marvel movies of the last decade is...

1. ... that they constantly undermine men's actions.
2. ... that the public cannot identify to them.
3. ... that their actions are constantly discredited by other characters.
4. ... that they don't have a sense of humour.

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D. Paragraph 3 (l. 20-31) – Fill this board with information from the text. Use your own words.

The main characteristic of female Avengers	<i>They are "constrained by emotional or romantic responsibility to their colleagues"</i> (l. 21)
What the journalist thinks future Marvel movies will be like
The way Hollywood is evolving
The role Marvel should have in this evolution

E. Using your own words, explain the following quote: "Representations of female action heroes can be more than a reflection of our culture, they must be a vision of how we view each other and our place in the universe, cinematic or otherwise." (l. 30-31)

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Les Prêtes à l'emploi

**BLACK WIDOW, FEMINISM
AND MARVEL'S POST-
AVENGERS PHASE**

LYCÉE

FICHE D'ACTIVITÉS ÉLÈVE

GRAMMAR CORNER

The **present perfect** is used to indicate a link between the present and the past. The time of the action is before now but not specified, and we are often more interested in the result than in the action itself. The present perfect of any verb is composed of two elements: the appropriate form of the auxiliary verb *to have* (present tense), plus the past participle of the main verb, e.g. "It has never failed".

There are six examples of present perfect in the text. Find them and explain why present perfect was used for each sentence.

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WRITING

Watch the movie *Wonder Woman* (2017). Let's organize an online debate about feminism in the movie on a collaborative wall! Some of you will give arguments to say the movie is feminist, some will say it's not. In turn, post messages on the wall to answer previous messages and give your opinion on the movie.

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SPEAKING

Do some research on famous Marvel heroines and prepare an oral presentation including the following elements:

- A brief description of the character's physical appearance and powers,
- A depiction of the character's story (in comic books and movies),
- The vision this character gives of feminism, according to you,
- Suggestions of scenarios for a potential future Marvel movie featuring this character.

You can use the following website to choose a character to work on: <https://www.marvel.com/articles/comics/the-greatest-female-marvel-super-heroes>.

Film or record your presentation at home!